

**To:** Brand, Martin (DEC)[martin.brand@dec.ny.gov]; Schick, Robert (DEC)[robert.schick@dec.ny.gov]; Berkman, Thomas S (DEC)[thomas.berkman@dec.ny.gov]; Crisafulli, Scott w (DEC)[scott.crisafulli@dec.ny.gov]; Casper, Peter M (DEC)[Peter.Casper@dec.ny.gov]; Goertz, Keith D (DEC)[keith.goertz@dec.ny.gov]; Georgeson, Rick N (DEC)[rick.georgeson@dec.ny.gov]; Eaton, Angus (DEC)[angus.eaton@dec.ny.gov]; Evans, Harold (DEC)[harold.evans@dec.ny.gov]; Tierney, James M (DEC)[james.tierney@dec.ny.gov]; Berger, Karl (DEC)[karl.berger@dec.ny.gov]; Alexander, Louis A (DEC)[louis.alexander@dec.ny.gov]; Klotz, Mark A (DEC)[mark.klotz@dec.ny.gov]; Martinez, Jazmin E (DEC)[jazmin.martinez@dec.ny.gov]; Simson, Robert J (DEC)[robert.simson@dec.ny.gov]; Van Patten, Susan E (DEC)[susan.vanpatten@dec.ny.gov]; Tang, Koon S (DEC)[koon.tang@dec.ny.gov]; Seggos, B B (DEC)[b.seggos@dec.ny.gov]; Delamater, Benning W (DEC)[Benning.Delamater@dec.ny.gov]; Frazier, Kevin O (DEC)[Kevin.Frazier@dec.ny.gov]; Lynch, Kenneth (DEC)[kenneth.lynch@dec.ny.gov]; Mahar, Sean C (DEC)[Sean.Mahar@dec.ny.gov]; McCleave, Mary B (DEC)[mary.mccleave@dec.ny.gov]; Miller, Jomo A (DEC)[jomo.miller@dec.ny.gov]; Murphy, Eileen (DEC)[eileen.murphy@dec.ny.gov]; Ringewald, Erica R (DEC)[Erica.Ringewald@dec.ny.gov]; Severino, Lori (DEC)[lori.severino@dec.ny.gov]; Sing-Wai, Shannon T (DEC)[Shannon.Sing-Wai@dec.ny.gov]; Tighe, Julia W (DEC)[julia.tighe@dec.ny.gov]; Walke, Peter W (DEC)[Peter.Walke@dec.ny.gov]  
**From:** McCleave, Mary B (DEC)  
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# Hoosick, Petersburg dumps declared potential Superfund sites

Announcement made less than a day before Senate hearing

By Matthew Hamilton and Casey Seiler

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Hoosick Falls

Less than 24 hours before the start of a state Senate hearing on water quality issues in Hoosick Falls, the state [Department of Environmental Conservation](#) on Monday declared municipal landfills in the village and the nearby Rensselaer County towns of Petersburg and Berlin to be "Potential State Superfund Sites."

The designation is an acknowledgement that the dumps contain perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), a substance that has linked to several diseases in humans. "Further investigation, in the form of a site characterization, will determine if there is evidence that hazardous waste was disposed at the landfills and whether any resulting contamination poses a significant threat to public health or the environment," DEC said in a release

For updates from Tuesday's hearing in Hoosick Falls, visit the Capitol Confidential blog and follow @Matt\_Hamilton10 on Twitter.

The agency's Commissioner [Basil Seggos](#) said identifying these two landfills as what he referred to as "P-sites" is the next step.

In its release Monday, DEC noted that monitoring wells at the Hoosick Falls site were found to contain concentrations up to 21,000 parts per trillion of PFOA, and samples from the Petersburg/Berlin site were found to contain concentrations up to 4,200 ppt.

In late January, the state [declared](#) the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics site in Hoosick Falls to be a Superfund site soon after declaring PFOA to be a regulated substance. PFOA, which was used at the facility, was used for decades in the production of products such as non-stick cookware.

A DEC spokesman said that while the Saint-Gobain facility's contamination and its proximity to sources of drinking water made it an immediate threat to human health (designated as a Class 2 Superfund site), testing of the contamination at the dump sites so far indicates that it is contained.

The Hoosick Falls landfill, owned by the village, was open from the mid-1930s until the early 1990s and accepted both municipal and industrial waste, according to DEC. A state review of the site suggests that groundwater flows toward the Hoosic River west of the landfill, and leachate — water that picks up material from a solid — from the dump drains to Thayer Pond to the south.

The Petersburg Landfill has been jointly owned by Berlin and Petersburg since 1982 and stopped accepting waste — material that is believed to have been both municipal and industrial — in 1991. DEC noted that a small tributary of the Little Hoosic River is located to the west of the dump and receives leachate from the landfill.

DEC said it will investigate past disposal practices at the landfills and any potential illegal dumping at both facilities.

The agency insisted there was no connection between the timing of the announcement and Tuesday's Senate hearing. That session will be watched closely not just in the Capital Region but also statewide, as other communities have grappled with water contamination issues of their own. The hearing is scheduled to begin at 10:30 a.m. at the Hoosick Falls High School, and is likely to run through the day.

As the Times Union reported Friday, the state commissioners of Health and Environmental Conservation are to testify at that hearing, as is Hoosick Falls Mayor David Borge. A full list of scheduled speakers released by the Senate Republican Majority on Monday also includes Michael Hickey, the village man who helped bring to light the PFOA contamination that has transfixed the area, and the supervisors of the towns of Petersburg and Hoosick.

An evening session for members of the public who would like to speak on a first-come, first-served basis is set to begin at 5 p.m.

The hearing will be the first of four to be held by state lawmakers after repeated calls to do so were made during the legislative session, which ended in June. Another hearing will be held by Senate; two others will be held jointly by the Assembly and Senate.

While the hearings will afford members of the public the opportunity to share their stories, they also will provide lawmakers with a base of information from which to build legislative proposals. Already, such proposals addressing water quality are flowing, including two proposed measures announced by state Sen. Brad Hoylman, D-Manhattan, on Monday.

One would require that the Department of Health review at least once every five years the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's contaminate candidate list for drinking water, which inventories substances not regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act, to determine whether the state should regulate any contaminants above and beyond what the federal agency recommends.

The other bill would require DOH to create a centralized database of lead pipes to identify potential contamination in local drinking water supplies.

[mhamilton@timesunion.com](mailto:mhamilton@timesunion.com) • 518-454-5449 • [@matt\\_hamilton10](https://twitter.com/matt_hamilton10)